

Relationship formation (and breakdown)

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Student Office Hours: Thursdays: 1 – 3pm

Psychology, C54

Living in a Social World



- Beginning and ending of (romantic) relationships
- Interpersonal attraction
- Culture and sub-culture



Interpersonal Attraction – *Why do we like some people?*

- Physical Attractiveness
 - The Matching Hypothesis



Physical Attractiveness



- First impression
- Women:
 - Large and widely separated eyes, small nose, small chin (like children) – but also wide cheekbones and narrow cheeks (not like children)
- Men:
 - Square jaw, small eyes, thin lips (not like children)
- Halo effect

The Matching Hypothesis

- Not the most attractive person but a match in attractiveness
 - Fear of rejection
 - Balance
 - Not just physical



Interpersonal Attraction

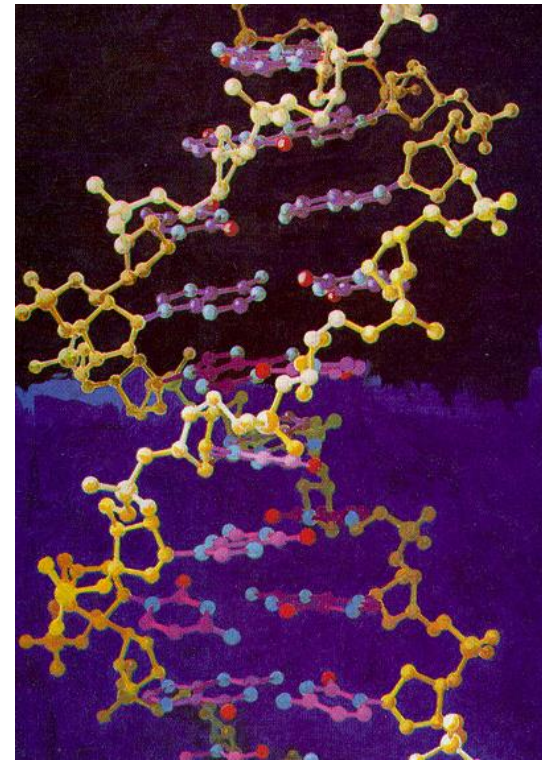
- Physical Attractiveness
 - The Matching Hypothesis
- Proximity
- Familiarity
- Attitude
- Similarity
- Demographic Similarity
- Similarity in Personality



Why do we form Relationships?

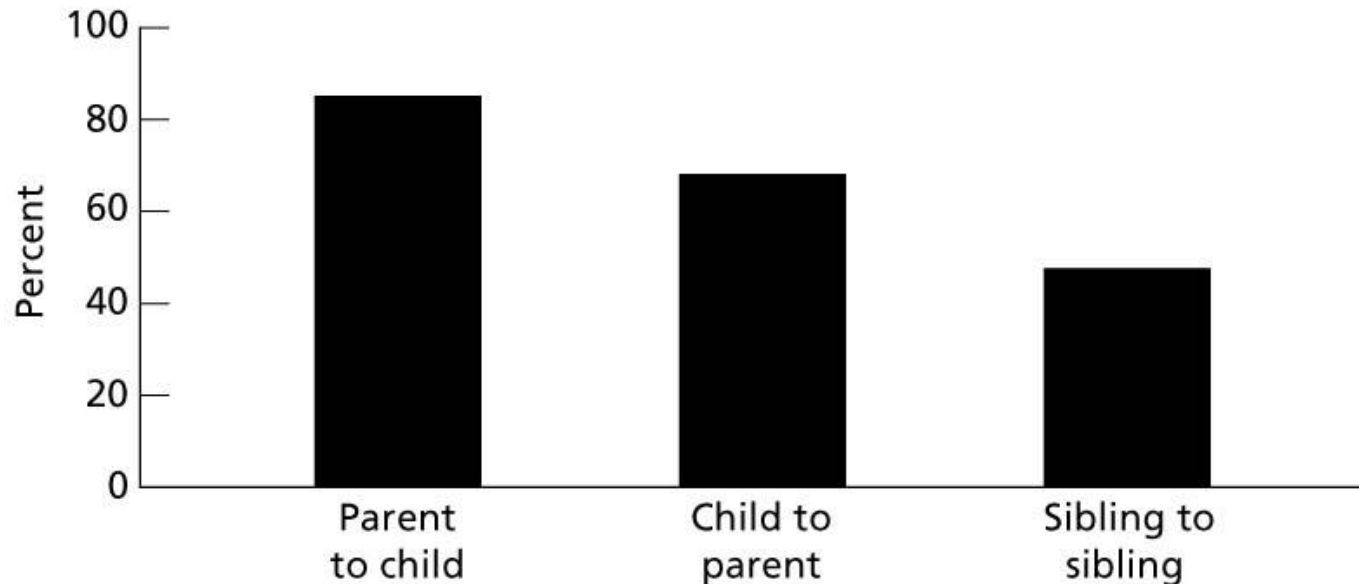
– Is it in our genes?

- Study experimentally?
- Relationships costly:
 - Evolutionary adaptive: survival and reproduction
 - “Blood is thicker than water” – closeness of families



Relatedness drives Helping

Kin selection
Willingness to donate kidney



See also:

Selfish
Gene
theory
(Richard
Dawkins)

Why do we form Relationships?

– Is it in our genes?

- Study experimentally?
- Relationships costly:
 - Evolutionary adaptive: survival and reproduction
 - “Blood is thicker than water” – closeness of families
- Non-reproductive relationships? Non-romantic relationships?

Why do we form relationships?

- Reward, reinforcement, satisfaction

- Form friendships/ relationships for rewards and reinforcement
 - Approval, smiling, (sex, love, money, etc)
- Classical condition
 - Neutral stimulus + reward → positive feeling
- More time with people who reward
- Less time with people who punish
- Relevant to early stages, parents/ children?, selfish?, context of reinforcement, individualistic/ male?

Economic Theories

- Maximise rewards, minimise the costs:
 - Cost:reward ratio
 - Thibault and Kelley, 1959
 - Comparison level (previous experience)
 - Comparison level for Alternatives
- Equity theory (stresses fairness)
- Descriptive, but research not informative

4 Stages of Relationships/ Friendship



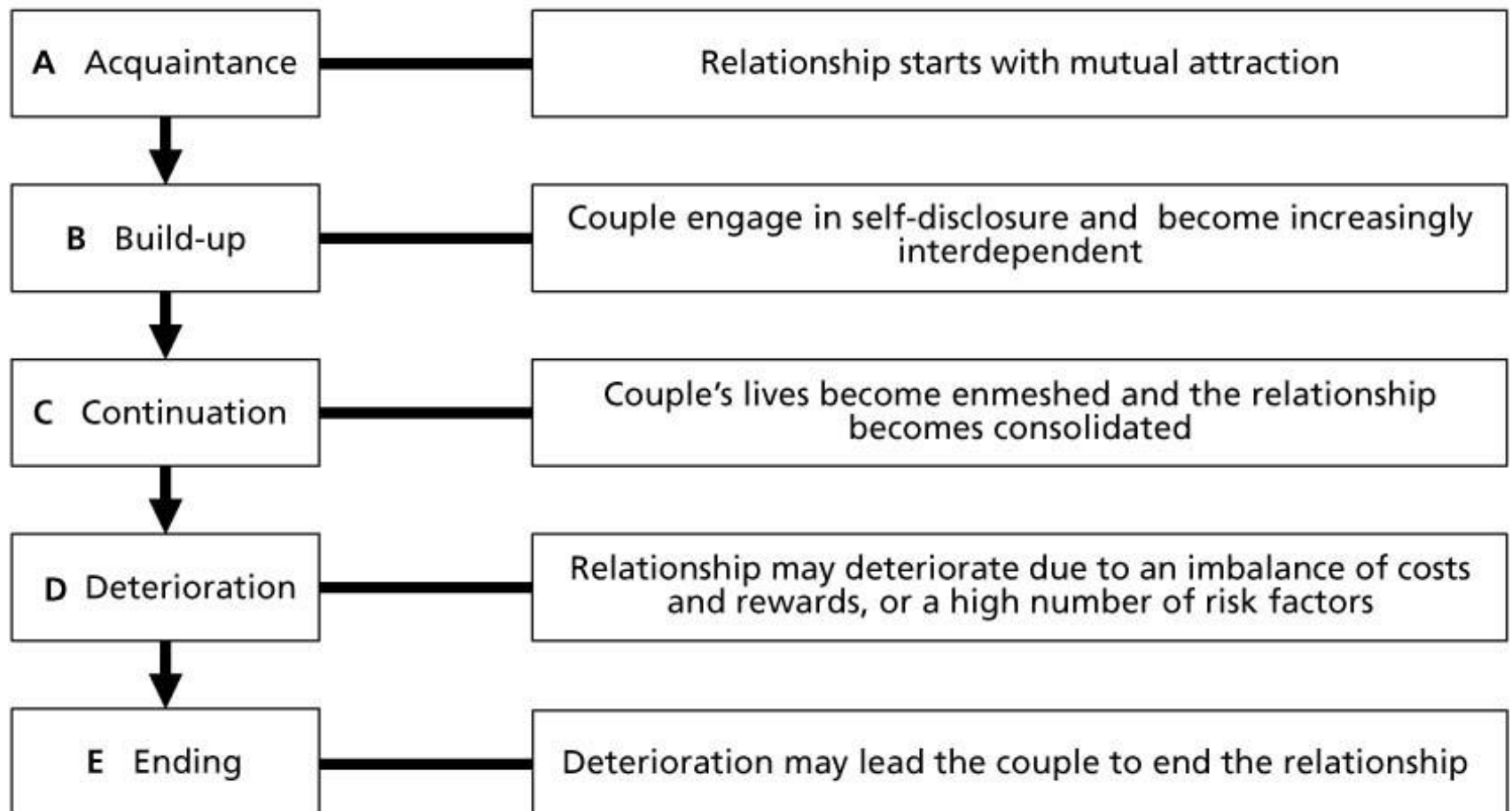
Maintenance of Relationships

- Self-disclosure
 - Sternberg (1986)
 - Social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973)
- Commitment
 - Investment model (Rusbult, 1980)
 - Maintenance strategies
 - voice
 - neglect
 - loyalty
 - exit

Conflict in relationship strategies (Rusbult et al., 1986)

VOICE	Active	Constructive	Discuss problems and seek answers	<div>High psychological femininity</div> <div>↕</div> <div>High psychological masculinity</div>
LOYALTY	Passive	Constructive	Wait and hope things improve	
NEGLECT	Passive	Destructive	Ignore partner and spend less time with them	
EXIT	Active	Destructive	Individual decides to abandon relationship	

Levinger's five-stage model



Relationship rules



- Argyle and Henderson (1984) 6 rules:
 1. Trust and confide in the other person
 2. Show emotional support
 3. Share news of success
 4. Strive to make the friend happy
 5. Volunteer help in time of need
 6. Stand up for a friend in his or her absence

Breakdown of Relationships

- Many reasons for break-up
- Reasons depend on
 - The particular circumstances
 - Their particular characteristics
- Some end in bitter recrimination
- Others are handled in a civilised way
- Similar processes tend to be involved in all break-ups



Relationship Survival



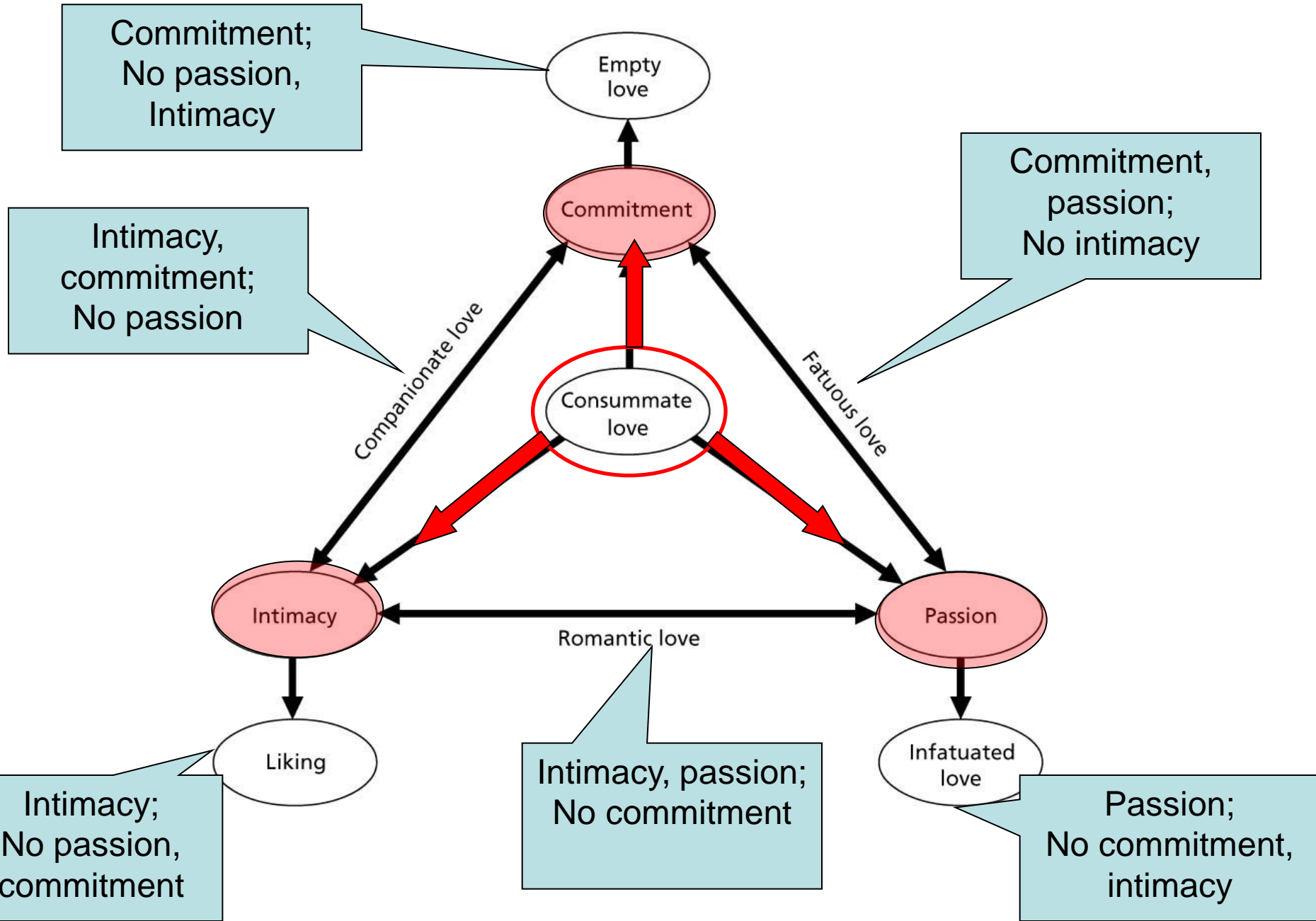
- Social exchange theory (Levinger, 1976)
- Marriage survival depends on 3 factors
 - the attractions (sexual and emotional)
 - the barriers to leaving the marriage
 - the presence of attractive alternatives
- Can explain why not all unhappy relationships end in breakdown
- But why do they *become* unhappy?

Psychological Explanations of Love

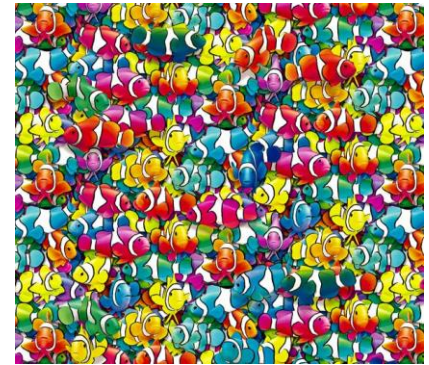
- Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory
 - Love consists of three components
 - intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment
- Liking and loving
 - The love quiz (Hazan & Shaver, 1987)
- Romantic and companionate love
 - Berscheid and Walster (1978)



Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of love

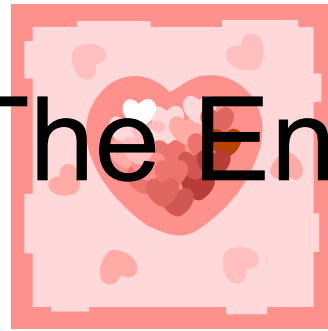


Relationships in Cultures



- Individualist and collectivist cultures (Levine et al., 1995)
- Romantic love (Levine et al., 1995):
 - More important in individualistic cultures
- Friendships:
 - Fewer but closer in collectivist cultures
- Voluntary and involuntary relationships (Shaver et al., 1991)
 - About the same level of happiness
- Permanent and impermanent relationships (Simmel, 1971)
 - Divorce rate higher in individualistic cultures

The End...



- Reading: Chapter 2

